

A new *Rhinoplocephalus* (Serpentes: Elapidae)
from Western Australia

G.M. Storr*

Storr *et al.* (1986: 104) mentioned that two snakes from Scaddan (430 km SW of the rest of the species' range) possibly represented a third subspecies of *Rhinoplocephalus spectabilis*. An additional two specimens have confirmed the distinctness of the Scaddan population.

Rhinoplocephalus spectabilis bushi sp. nov.

Holotype

R96223 in West. Aust. Mus., collected by B.G. Bush on 6 October 1986 at Scaddan, WA in 33°27'S, 121°44'E.

Paratypes

Eucla Division (WA)

Scaddan (WAM R83986, 93558, 96224).

Diagnosis

A *Rhinoplocephalus* very like *R. s. nullarbor* (Storr) but slightly larger (total length up to 392 mm, v. 379) and having more ventrals (159-165, v. 135-158) and a pale spot behind eye.

Description

Snout-vent length (mm): 234-342. Tail length (% SVL): 13.6-14.6 (N 4, mean 14.1).

Internasals 0.7-0.8 times as long as prefrontals. Frontal 1.3-1.7 times as long as wide, and 1.8-2.1 times as wide as supraocular. Preocular widely separated from frontal and in short contact with nasal. Postoculars 2, lower narrower. Temporals 2 + 2. Upper labials 6. Lower labials 7. Midbody scale rows 15, increasing to 17-21 on neck and decreasing to 12-13 before vent. Ventrals 159-165. Subcaudals 30-36. Ventrals plus subcaudals 190-201.

Head and neck glossy black, broken by pale marks in front of and behind eye, black extending back on to first 6-7 vertebrae. Rest of upper surface greyish brown, each scale with a small black blotch extending back as a fine edge on anterior facets (posterior facets white-edged). Lips and lower surface whitish.

Distribution

Only known from Scaddan (50 km N of Esperance) near south coast of Western Australia.

* c/o Western Australian Museum, Francis Street, Perth, Western Australia 6000.

Remarks

In size and number of ventrals this taxon tends towards *R. gouldii* (Gray). However, there is no approach in colouration, despite its proximity to the eastern population of *R. gouldii*. For description of *R. s. nullarbor* and *R. gouldii* see Storr (1981); for transfer of these species from *Denisonia* to *Rhinoplocephalus* see Storr (1985).

Derivation of name

After Brian Gordon Bush of Lort River, in recognition of his contributions to the herpetology of the Esperance region.

References

- Storr, G.M. (1981). The *Denisonia gouldii* species-group (Serpentes, Elapidae) in Western Australia. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus.* 8: 501-515.
- Storr, G.M. (1985). Phylogenetic relationships of Australian elapid snakes: external morphology with an emphasis on species in Western Australia. In: G. Grigg, R. Shine and H. Ehmann (eds). *Biology of Australasian Frogs and Reptiles*. Beatty, Chipping Norton, pp. 221-222.
- Storr, G.M., Smith, L.A. and Johnstone, R.E. (1986). *Snakes of Western Australia*. West. Aust. Mus., Perth.